



Study: Research capacity at higher education institutions in the Western Balkans - 2017

General overview

- 2014-2017 (intended to prolong to 2018)
- Provided by the **European Commission** through the **EACEA**
- Implemented by SPHERE consortium:
 - **University of Barcelona & European University Association (EUA)**
- Support to **260 Higher Education Reform Experts** in **26 European Neighbourhood countries**
- Close cooperation with **National Erasmus Offices (NEO)**

Activities

- **Events: Annual conference, 2 thematic seminars, 2 study visits** at higher education institutions
- **Technical Assistance Missions (TAM - approx 55/year)**
 - Targeted county assistance
 - Annual call for proposals
 - Expert provided for national support/national activity
- **Website and Virtual Community**
- **Studies**

Study: Research Capacity at higher education institutions in the Western Balkans

Purpose

- **Map research capacity at higher ed institutions (HEI) in WB (defined as human resources (HR), financial resources & research infrastructure) through desk research and questionnaires.**
- **Provide country analyses of research capacity, including some cross-regional and cross-EU comparisons,** for illustration purposes (e.g. compare the weakest/strongest MS, also in terms of GDP spending on research etc., to give an idea of where countries stand in the wider picture of EU accession).
- **Provide recommendations for national authorities** with regards to building research capacity in WB countries
- Provide **comprehensive recommendations for measures to be taken by the EU** (through future programmes).

Method

- Desk research
- Surveys to HEI, faculties, researchers
- Visits to Albania, Kosovo*, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia
- 1-2 universities per country
 - Leadership (rector / VR research)
 - Deans
 - Faculty/ researchers
 - Junior researchers/ PhD candidates
- Interviews with Ministry, industry representatives ...

*(This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.)

Survey

Response rate (31 May)



Approach

- 3 complementary questionnaires – interlinked
- March-May: disseminated via HEI leadership
- June: follow-up by phone to HEI & faculties, international offices
- Diverse reactions:
 - Welcomed as a means for self-evaluation
 - Survey fatigue: “it will not change anything” (reference to previous surveys, that would not have been followed up)
- Survey design considered decentralised institutional structure
- Surveys still ongoing – in order to achieve better geographical distribution
- Responses often from institutions with low research performance
- Overall low response from researchers (most responses from Serbia)
- Evaluation: beginning July

State of play/timeline

- Surveys close to conclusion – trying to get a better geographical spread
- Visits & interviews started
- Preliminary results: mid-July
- Results ready – September
- Final report & recommendations: Nov/Dec 2017

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|-------------------------|----------------|
| Serbia | 31May – 2 June |
| FYR of Macedonia | 6-7 June |
| Kosovo* | 8-9 June |
| Bosnia-Herz | 15 June |
| Albania | 19-21 June |
| Montenegro | 22-23 June |
| Bosnia-Herz | 26 June? |

First observations

Based on survey and visits in Serbia

- Strong interest in intra-WB research collaboration
- very low level of funding (research grants) to undertake Research projects.
- no calls for capital equipment for many years
- Sustainability problems – due to high costs for maintenance & renewal of equipment, research materials (higher than e.g. in EU countries) etc.
- Diminishing prospects for contract research/ industry collaboration (also due to privatisation of industry) - difficulties in building up relations with SMIs
- Research in highly decentralised institutions with autonomous faculties and institutions
 - collaboration depending on individual staff
 - obstacles for sharing resources
 - difficulty of organising adequate research support capacities
- Doctoral education
 - based on the apprenticeship model
 - no to low attention to transversal skills
 - mentoring & access to research means varies case by case
 - urgent need for more structured support (e.g. career advice ...)

Contact

TEAM:

- Experts
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